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Vendors Exchange, MEI Develop Cashless System For Games

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CLEVELAND — Vendors Exchange International Inc. and MEI are teaming up to market a new cashless payment system tailored for the amusement industry. Now available through MEI distributors, it consists of MEI's Series 2000 Combo Acceptor, a remote data port and a control board created by Vendors Exchange.

Designed to increase impulse purchases, the new system offers customers the choice of using cash or credit cards to activate games and provides equipment operators with enhanced cash auditing capability.

The cashless payment technology is rolling out in two versions, for basic or enhanced operation. A standard upgrade kit with an MEI multi-drop bus (MDB) validator supports credit card acceptance, bill auditing and forced settlement with a service card. In addition to the standard features, the deluxe kit, configured to work with MEI's 110V. validators, adds cashless, bill and coin auditing, along with the ability to transmit all machine activity to the credit card server, where it can be monitored remotely. Remote monitoring and programming options in the deluxe kit include door-open switch, cash meter, multi-pricing and guaranteed win/second chance settings.

Vendors Exchange, well known for its kit upgrades to modernize legacy merchandise-vending equipment and payment systems, is now bringing its expertise to the amusement industry with the new MEI kit. For its part, the company developed the control board, housed in a black box, which enables MEI's remote data port and a pulse amusement device to communicate. The black box interfaces with existing payment technology and also serves as a dynamic platform that can support incremental applications based on demand.

One of the key benefits of the system, explained Vendors Exchange's Tom Swimmer, is that it does not require the operator to replace existing 110V. banknote validators. "The MEI Combo mask simply replaces the plastic face mask on validators and that permits the credit card swipe," he said.

The MEI Series 2000 Combo Acceptor is a versatile payment system, initially developed for vending machines, that combines a bill acceptor and card reader. It features the popular Series 2000 banknote validator and can fit in existing mountings where the Series VN2512 full-face bill acceptors are used. It is equipped with a high-contrast, two-line display easily visible in bright light or darkness. An armored bezel made of chrome-steel deters break-ins and protects against damage from corrosive elements. And its swipe-style card reader and bill path resist inadvertent coin insertion.

To enable credit card transactions once the kit's hardware has been installed, the operator is required to open an account with USA Technologies, a leading processor of micropayments for the vending industry. Here, credit card transactions are approved or declined. Credit card sales through amusement machines are posted on a secure website where equipment owners can view a machine's transactions.



With the deluxe kit, operators also can access coin and bill transactions, along with a machine's full remote audit report. Time-stamped data showing door entries, collection activity and bill validator errors also are available remotely.

Machines communicate with the server over wireless a connection. USAT charges a monthly fee of \$9.95 for the service; the cost of credit card transactions, which average between 3.5% and 5% of the total sale, is determined by the dollar amount.

According to Swimmer, the MEI Series 2000 Combo Acceptor and Vendors Exchange upgrade kit is winning approval from operators, distributors and manufacturers who see the benefits cashless capability brings to the U.S. coin-op amusement marketplace. "While adding credit card acceptance to games is a big advantage," he said, "the ability to audit machines remotely is the feature creating the most excitement."

To date, Swimmer reported, the cashless kits have been installed and tested in a wide range of amusement and unattended novelty devices, from skill cranes, high-end prize venders and bowling machines to massage chairs and DVD vending machines.

Founded in 1960, Vendors Exchange is one of the nation's largest suppliers of new, reconditioned and as-is can soda, snack, food and coffee machines. It also markets coin mechanisms and bill validators for the domestic and international vending markets. Its replacement parts division supports all types of vending machines and stocks thousands of OEM and VE-branded parts. Information on the MEI Series 2000 Combo Acceptor and Vendors Exchange cashless upgrade kit can be had by calling Vendors Exchange at (800) 321-2311 or by emailing tom.swimmer@veii.com. Details also are available from MEI distributors.